

## ORNITHOLOGICAL LITERATURE

BIRDS OF THE EURASIAN TUNDRA. By Theodore Pleske. *Memoirs Bost. Soc. Nat. Hist.*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Boston, 1928. Pp. 107-485. Pls. 16-38, six in color. Price, \$5.00 in paper, \$5.75 in cloth.

This paper by Prof. Pleske is one of the most elaborate among the faunal lists which have appeared in recent years. It is based upon the collections of the Russian Polar Expedition of 1900-1903. The history of the expedition is given in detail at the outset, and forms Part I. The ornithological work in the field was done by Dr. H. Walter, who was also the physician of the party, and by A. Bialynicki-Birula, zoologist of the St. Petersburg Academy of Science. Dr. Walter died during the second year in the field.

The tundra is defined as the alpine zone of the holarctic region. The polar region is divided into the Sylvan Zone (forests), the Subalpine Zone (brush), and the Alpine Zone (tundra), or barren lands. The Eurasian tundra described in the present work extends from the Kola Peninsula of Russia eastward over the Taimyr Peninsula to the eastern limit of Siberia. Many islands north of the mainland are included in the area of study. Seventy-one species of arctic birds are listed in Part II of the paper, which covers 231 pages. For further convenience the entire area is subdivided into twenty-one smaller portions which are treated in detail in as many sections, which form Part III, covering 76 pages. For each of the sections a list of the birds is given, and a bibliography of the literature. Part IV is a further distributional study in summary.

The plates are splendidly done by the heliotype process. There is one colored plate showing the nest and young of the Snowy Owl; another of the adult and young of the Sanderling; another of the adult and young of the Knot; another of the adult Rock Ptarmigan; all from water color paintings by B. Watagin. It is a great privilege to have such a valuable foreign work translated and published in English.—T. C. S.

THE HEATH HEN. By Alfred O. Gross, Ph. D. *Memoirs Boston Soc. Nat. Hist.*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1928. Pp. 487-588. Pls. 39-50. Price, \$2.25 in paper, \$2.90 in cloth.

Dr. Gross has been engaged for several years in a field study of the Heath Hen on Martha's Vineyard Island, Massachusetts. According to most accounts this species is on the verge of extinction, though Dr. Gross has rather an optimistic paragraph in his introduction. We have seen and heard during the past year considerable criticism of the Massachusetts authorities for their attitude toward the protection of the Heath Hen. For instance, it has been stated that more recently the authorities refused to grant a permit to the warden to kill birds of prey found in the Heath Hen refuge. It is hard to believe that such a statement would be made unless true, and still harder to believe that it is true. Without more complete information at hand we will refrain from expressing any further opinion.

Dr. Gross has had the very rare privilege of studying a species on its death-bed—perhaps for the first time in history. The inimical factors involved in the progressive decline in the Heath Hen population are enumerated by Gross as man, predaceous animals (cats, rats, hawks, owls, crows), diseases